

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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TAGS: PFOR, PINS, TH, LA

SUBJ: PRAPHAT ON LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES

REF : FBIS 051029 OCT 73

THE FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL USIS TRANSLATION OF
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIRA'S OCTOBER 4
PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS ON LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES:

PRAPHAT: IN REGARD TO LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES HERE,
WHEN THE ABORTIVE COUP WAS STAGED, I FELT THAT THE LAO
GOVERNMENT IN VIENTIANE FELT VERY SUSPICIOUS AT FIRST,
BUT WHEN THE SITUATION CLEARED UP LATER, IT NO LONGER SUFFERED
FROM ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS. THIS WAS EXPECIALLY THE
CASE ON THE PART OF THE MILITARY WHO FELT MOST SUSPICIOUS
AT FIRST BUT WHOSE SUSPICIONS WERE CLEARED AWAY LATER WHEN
THEY KNEW WHAT WAS WHAT. WE SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO CLEAR
UP ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION,
RESULTING IN SATISFACTORY UNDERSTANDING BEING REACHED.
BUT RUMORS AND REPORTS ARE STILL THIS SPREAD CONSTANTLY
BECAUSE THE OTHER SIDE TRIES TO FABRICATE AND PLAY UP
REPORTS TO CONTINUE CREATING DOUBTS AND SUSPICIONS.
IT IS A FACT THAT ALL PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY OVERCOME
NOW AND WORK IS BEING CLOSELY COORDINATED BETWEEN

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THAILAND AND LAOS ALONG BOTH BANKS OF THE MEKONG RIVER.

THE ONLY QUESTION REMAINING NOW IS REGARDING COLONEL BOONLERT CHAIKOSI (SIC), WHO HAS NOT BEEN FOUND YET, AND IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER HE IS IN LAOS OR IN THAILAND.

REPORTER: IT WAS SAID RECENTLY THAT COLONEL BOONLERT HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT.

PRAPHAT: SINCE HE HAS NOT BEEN FOUND AND NOBODY KNOWS WHERE HE IS, ALL KINDS OF RUMORS ARE BEING SPREAD, SUCH AS THAT HE IS ROUNDING UP FORCES HERE OR THERE. WHAT IS VERY CERTAIN IS THAT NO FORCES CAN BE ROUNDED UP HERE IN THAILAND IN ORDER TO TAKE ANY ACTION AGAINST LAOS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. NO SUCH MOVES CAN BE TAKEN ESPECIALLY IN OUR BORDER AREAS ALONG THE BANK OF THE MEKONG RIVER, WHERE WE HAVE NAVY, ARMY AND POLICE UNITS PATROLLING OUR BORDER WITH LAOS. GRAVE CONCERN IS FELT, HOWEVER, OVER THE LAO SIDE OF THE BORDER BECAUSE ON THE LAO SIDE ALMOST THE WHOLE OF THE AREA SOUTH OF PAKSANE IS IN THE HANDS OF THE REDS, THUS MAKING IT VERY DIFFICULT TO GUARD THE BORDER.

REPORTER: DOES THAT MEAN THAT SATISFACTORY UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED OVER THE DEMAND FOR US TO TURN OVER REBELS TO LAOS?

PRAPHAT: YES, LAOS NOW UNDERSTANDS THAILAND'S SITUATION AND TO WHAT EXTENT WE CAN TAKE ACTION. WE HAVE EXPLAINED ALREADY THAT WE WILL TAKE ALL ACTION WE CAN UNDER THAI LAW AND UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.

REPORTER: ARE THESE POLITICAL REFUGEES AT A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE FROM VIENTIANE?

PRAPHAT: WE HAVE BROUGHT THEM AND ARE KEEPING THEM HERE IN BANGKOK, WHICH IS AT A FAIRLY CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE, BUT WE HAVE TO ALLOW THEM TO EARN THEIR OWN LIVING BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO PROVIDE EVERYTHING FOR THEM AND LET THEM REMAIN IDLE. FROM ANOTHER ANGLE, COMMUNICATIONS IN THAILAND ARE EXCELLENT NOW AND THERE ARE ROADS LINKING BANGKOK WITH ALL PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY. FOR INSTANCE, TO

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GO BY CAR FROM BANGKOK TO NONG KHAI TAKES ONLY 4 HOURS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE SEEN THAT THESE REFUGEES HAVE BEHAVED THEMSELVES IN A SATISFACTORY MANNER IN THE PAST, THAT THEY ARE ENGAGED IN STABLE OCCUPATIONS, AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OR INDICATION WHATSOEVER THAT THEY WERE PLOTTING ANY MORE. WHEN THAT ABORTIVE COUP WAS STAGED, IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BECAUSE SUPERVISION OVER THEM WAS SLIGHTLY RELAXED. WE ARE KEEPING CLOSE WATCH OVER THEM ALL THE

TIME NOW, ESPECIALLY OVER GENERAL PHOUMI NOSAVAN.
THERE ARE CONTINUAL REMORS THAT HE HAS GONE HERE AND
THERE, BUT THERE IS NO TRUTH WHATSOEVER IN THOSE RUMORS.
HE HAS REMAINED HERE IN BANGKOK THROUGHOUT AND HE IS BEING
KEPT UNDER CLOSE WATCH AND SUPERVISION HERE ALL THE TIME.
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